

## **Abstract: Reflective Language Teaching**

--quote from *Shaping the Way We Teach English: Successful Practices Around the World*: p 144

“Good teachers are always learning: learning from students, learning from their own trial and error, learning from peers and colleagues, learning from mentors and supervisors, and learning from academic information in their field. Good teachers continue to learn throughout their careers. This is called “life-long” or “ongoing professional development.” One tool that can help teachers develop professionally is known as “reflective teaching practice.”

Reflective teaching means thinking about what happens in the classroom, both in terms of the teaching itself, and in terms of the learner response, and then, trying to improve it. We can ask ourselves:

- Were the goals of the session met? Why or why not?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- Did learners act as expected? Why or why not?
- How can class sessions be improved to provide opportunities for better learning? “

## **Transcript**

**Wang Ping:** Hi everyone! Welcome to our English Roundtable Webchat! We are about to begin in 15 minutes. While we are waiting for people to jump in, please feel free to browse through the PPT we have prepared on the topic of Reflective Language Teaching. You may also start to submit your questions/answers.

**Wang Hongwei:** hello,everyone out there!!

**sonthida 2:** Hi, Wang Hongwei and everyone!

**Wang Ping:** Unfortunately Damon today couldn't make it to the chat. He wants me to send his warm welcome to all of you. Sitting in today with me are our Senior English Language Fellow Dr. Wendy Ashby, colleagues from Bangkok and Mongolia and teachers like you from all over China and other countries. I'm sure we will have good discussions in next hour!

**Ms. Duyen 2:** Hi everyone

**Wendy Ashby:** Hi everybody. So glad you could all join us today!

**Kiki:** Hi everyone!

**Wang Ping:** Have you looked through the PPT? Any thoughts on reflective language teaching?

**Ms. Duyen 2:** Yes

**Wang Hongwei:** teaching is for us a lifelong process of professional development, so reflective teaching is a good topic

**Tran Nguyet Minh:** Good afternoon!

**Kiki:** I think it's the best way for teachers to improve their teaching skills.

**Kiki:** It should be formed as a habit.

**Tran Nguyet Minh:** Well, I just have no idea about reflective teaching. How can we apply this into the classroom?

**Wang Hongwei:** for some of us we do teaching without actually thinking why teaching has to be done in this way!!

**Wang Ping:** Kiki, could you elaborate more why you think RT is good for teachers' professional development?

**Phanisara:** I like the word "reflective." It reminds us to constantly think and evaluate what we're doing as teachers.

**sonthida 2:** What actually do you do in the process of reflecting?

**Ms. Duyen 2:** From my understanding, to practice reflective teaching means you keep a diary about what you have done and base on your own assessment as well as student's response you will think of ways to improve your own teaching right?

**Wang Hongwei:** many definitions you can probably find!! a reflective approach to teaching is "one in which teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching."

**Tran Nguyet Minh:** So RT is kind of a principle, isn't it?

**Wang Hongwei:** a new approach to teaching

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Hi everyone! It's nice to collaborate via this wonderful channel. To me self-reflection takes time and patience. However, I usually do it via my students' learning logs and course diagnoses.

**Tran Nguyet Minh:** Ah yes, thanks. But I think it's new in terms of the way we call it. That's actually the approach used for long.

**Wendy Ashby:** Ubon, can you tell us more about what kinds of things you look for from your students that inform you about your teaching?

**Wang Hongwei:** RT, as i think may including teacher's self development, and teachers have always keep an eye on what are consequences of your teaching on your students!

**Wang Ping:** As teachers we may have different approaches to make sense of our own teaching and figure out why we do so. As some of us just pointed out, we keep teaching journals, invite comments and feedback on our teaching from our students and colleagues, and more.

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** It takes time because it cannot be done in just at the end of teaching period or at the end the whole course. I usually have my students write their learning logs and submit it to me at the end of each hour and see how they think of my teaching and the activities incorporate in each class.

**Phanisara:** Sometimes we follow someone else lesson plans that might not particularly fit totally well with our students. When we reflect, look back, ask and listen to students feedback, we will know what kind of supplementary materials we should provide for our students.

**Wang Hongwei:** teachers must have an extensive knowledge base about teaching

**Wang Ping:** Ubon, thank you for sharing your practice with us! Have you found this helpful? Do students' logs often lend you insights into your teaching?

**sonthida 2:** Wang Ping, but are those reflections? TO my understanding refelction is what you think about yourself, not how people lookat you. The latter thing is to me 'an evaluation' of my teaching.

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Wang Ping, thank to your thank. It's nice to get to know you online. Absolutely, a learning log is a great way to know what students think and need. "Insight" is the right term. Thanks. What do you usually do to get a good 'mirrior' from your students?

**Wang Hongwei:** to interact with students is helpful to my teaching, in China we use QQ to talk to students, and get to know their problems!!

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Wang Hongwei, what does QQ stand for?

**Wang Hongwei:** actually we do self evaluation allthe time on how well we have taught!!

**Wendy Ashby:** Hi Sonthida - I was thinking the same thing. I think that student feedback is just one part of something that we call "triangulation". This means that your self assessment, your students assessments, and your peer assessments match up to some degree. I think in this case, the students are the actual mirror, but what you see in it is your self reflection. Does that make sense?

**Wang Hongwei:** it is an instant message system!!!like MSN

**Wang Ping:** Re Sothida 2: That's a great question! To me, any practices that can help me as a teacher to gain better understanding of my teaching from OUTSIDE is reflective teaching/learning.

**Wang Hongwei:** ubon, are u now in China??

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Hi! Wendy and Sonthida! I agree with both of you.

**Phanisara:** I can see reflection as both coming in from within and also analyzing the input provided from the outside sources.

**Wang Hongwei:** In china, it is a very powerful online chatting tool!!

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Wang Hongwei, I am in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Phanisara:** Prof. Ubon is current ThaiTESOL President. Prof. Sonthida is our former ThaiTESOL President.

**Tony Newman:** To be a "reflective" teacher, what specific preparation do you think is needed before the first day of class?

**Wang Hongwei:** experience in teaching does help one's reflection about the quality of teaching, room for further improvement!!

**Phanisara:** May be what's needed (other than having the lesson plans) is an open mind to how students engage with the lessons, an open mind to see what can be reflected upon afterward.

**Wang Hongwei:** so happy to talk to so many leaders!!

**urairat thongpinit:** hi, i am trying to catch up with you guys.

**Wang Ping:** Ubon, I would talk to my students to find out how they think of the class. Once in a while, teachers that are just fresh out of college would have their class recorded and do a follow-up analysis later.

**Wendy Ashby:** Phanisara - I think that is an important point. Sometimes things did not go as expected in my classes and then upon reflecting, I realized that it worked even better than planned. Those lucky accidents can really inform your teaching if you are aware enough to note and think about them.

**Kiki:** RT is a place where english teaching professionals share and change ideas freely, i enjoy each chance here.

**Wang Ping:** Welcome Profs Ubon and Sonthida! How great to have you join us today!

**Wang Hongwei:** i teach interpreting! for the course i have no problem to keep them busy , because i always want them to give the quickest response!!within 3 secs!!

**Phanisara:** Thank you Wendy! And I agree with Kiki. Webchat like this can provide a space for us to reflect and hear other reflections.

**sonthida 2:** Yes, Wendy, that makes sense. So when doing reflections you do not only look at yourself yourself but also look at how people (students, peers, etc.) look at you. Is there any structure to reflective teaching? For example, what kind of things do you look at yourself e.g. giving instructions, planning a lesson?

**Wendy Ashby:** For those of you who practice various types of self reflection, how has it changed you as a teacher? What have you become more aware of?

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Tony, to me there are 3 preparations: self (to be ready to answer questions), activities (relevant to students age, interest, and need), and flexibility (to be able to make a change, compromise the idea(s), and to see what can be best to make students learn).

**Wang Ping:** Nina, you are so right! It takes some risk-taking spirits and open-mindedness to holding up the mirror to yourself!

**Tony Newman:** Good ideas, Ubon.

**Wendy Ashby:** Sonthida, that is a very good question. I have done a lot of research on teacher feedback, and all of the things that you mention are very important aspects of things to look at. I would say all of those and more. Usually, I try to find one focus area from my own observation or from noting student or peer comments and then work on that for awhile.

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Risk-taking is challenging, too, Nina and Wendy.

**Wang Hongwei:** teaching interpreting is quite challenging, because I myself have to be in responding!! also updating my knowledge is part of the professional requirement, which is hard for me!! you have to know something out of everything!!

**Wendy Ashby:** Hi Ubon, I agree. I hate seeing myself on videotape teaching because it really puts me out there and exposes me to the world.

**Wang Ping:** To share a story that I just learned from a teacher trainer's book: One participant from a teacher development workshop says to the trainer, "you can train me, and you can educate me, but you can't develop me—I develop". What do you think?

**Wang Hongwei:** because I know experience is insufficient as a basis for professional development.

**Phanisara:** Reflection helps me realize that there are more multiple ways of learning and teaching. What I think might work for some students, might not work for all students. Repeated reflection will help us be more compassionate teachers; and then we will become more resourceful as we try to find solutions for our learners.

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Peer reflection is great, too. The problem is to find time to share your teaching with your colleagues, but once you start sharing, numerous ideas flow!

**Wendy Ashby:** Wang Hongwei, can you explain more please? Do you mean that just because a person has taught for a long time does not mean that they are developing?

**sonthida 2:** So, Wendy, coming back to Tony question what to prepare before teaching the first class, maybe you need to be specific about what you would like to know about yourself and then at the end of the class reflect on this particular point.

**sonthida 2:** Sorry, I meant "first class"

**Wang Hongwei:** whether a teacher can have further development depends on how well they want to teach!

**Wendy Ashby:** Yes Sonthida, that is exactly right. One of the things that we know from research on teacher development is that they must be attuned to the issue in order for feedback to be meaningful and effective. So, it is best if the teacher chooses the focus area and not the observer.

**Wang Hongwei:** and depends on peer reflection and rewarding/or stimulus system, too!!

**Phanisara:** I like the quote Ping. I guess no one can develop us; unless we ourselves learn to develop. And we can not develop without reflection of what has been done appropriately or inappropriately.

**Wang Shujuan:** From students' feedback teachers can get enlightenment and reflective research

**sonthida:** And what is the criteria for choosing that "focus"? Your own intuition? Is there any suggestions by any experts on what should the focus be? SORRY, I'm a teacher trainer and was thinking from the perspective of training teachers how to reflect rather than think about my own reflection.

**Wang Ping:** Learning to choose the focus area(s) to reflect on and to invite feedback is so RT! So is learning to prioritize our development goals.

**Tony Newman:** After a deep self-reflection, do you think a deep review of the material is also needed? Such as, "last year I was not comfortable teaching this grammar part, so this year I will..."

**Wang Hongwei:** a person who has taught for a long time may easily have contended with what he teaches as doing, I would call it as a kind of fatigue or lethargy in some stages of professional career, I don't know this answer is OK, Wendy!!

**Wang Ping:** Tony, it sounds a good idea!

**Wendy Ashby:** Wang Hongwei, I think that you are exactly right about this issue. In my former job, I saw a LOT of that going on, and when we introduced a recertification program at five year intervals for all of our faculty, it was the most experienced ones who seemed to complain the most.

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Based on my experience, self-reflection has given me insights toward students' feedback, made me work harder, and my students and I seem to work closer. I can learn from them to prepare a more interesting lesson. Also, I am more confident to expand the time for students' understanding of the lesson. I say 'more confident' because sometimes the time constraint during each course makes me hurry to finish my teaching required by my university. This can make me hesitate to give my students more activities.

**Hoang Hanh:** To avoid fatigue or burn-out, a constructive teaching community in which teachers share reflections and ideas would help refresh

**Wang Ping:** Wang Hongwei, your comments remind me of a comparison: a teacher with 20 year of teaching experiences vs. a teacher with one year experience but repeated 20 times!

**Wendy Ashby:** Wang Ping, what a great quote! And so true

**Wang Shujuan:** teaching material is the same, but students are different and you will get different reflection ,

**Wang Hongwei:** yes, so whether a teacher can have a further development really depends on how well you want your teaching to be, and find out ways to substantiate!!

**Kiki:** Ping, I know that comparison! And I support the idea of Constructive teaching community. It's also an experimental field that we can try some new strategies with peers and welcome their comments before we try it on the students.

**Wang Ping:** Wang Hongwei, Yes, I think real development can only come from within. Nobody can force you to change, for long.

**Phanisara:** Response to Tony. A deep review of the material and also may be the approaches of teaching the materials. If we're not comfortable teaching a certain grammar part--yes may be this year, we will be comfortable. Or may be I'll co-teach with someone who's good with this particular grammar point. Or consider other media and resources to approach to teach this particular content. Reflection will provide us with options and possible solutions.

**Tony Newman:** Great idea, Phanisara...

**Kiki:** Micro-teaching is a good means of reflective teaching.

**Wang Hongwei:** so just on how well you want your teaching to be, this is the really motivation for teacher's development, improvement in teaching, always find ways to interest your students, find out what they think of your teaching, etc..

**Wang Ping:** Kiki, thank you. Web chats is one way of sharing teaching ideas and practices within professional communities.

**Hoang Hanh:** I agree with WP that no one can force us to change. However, in a facilitating community, we can be motivated, encouraged and we develop our own motives for change. We turn "external facilitation" into "internal push"

**Kiki:** From my own experience, a quick note after the class about the reflections is very important and useful. Sometimes we just get "too busy" to make notes and forget it after a while.

**Xuemei Peng:** How to motivate other teachers to be reflective?

**Wang Shujuan:** Teachers' fun in teaching is that different students' feedback is always different, so teachers can make progress.

**Wendy Ashby:** Kiki - you bring up a VERY important point. I have a self-imposed rule that nothing else gets done before I complete the note-taking/data gathering for the class that was just taught. It is so easy to lose important information or forget ideas and insights.

**Wang Hongwei:** i quote a chinese old saying here "keeping up with the time", teachers have to make some changes happen in order to teach better!

**Kiki:** True, Wendy! I always use a RED pen to write on my teaching plan and I found that I can develop a journal or even an essay from some simple notes later.

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Xuemei, I think you can begin by talking/sharing your own with your peers. You can ask for their idea(s) and better ways to teach or evaluate their students. Then ask them how they do in their classes. Maybe a friendly approach works.

**Wendy Ashby:** Does anybody ever use their notes as a basis for a write up about teaching ideas and submit them for publication?

**Phanisara:** Also satisfaction from KNOWING that your teaching has really reach your students today will in itself encourage any teachers to be reflective teachers.

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** I mean to say 'evaluate your students' not 'their students'. : )

**Wang Hongwei:** "external facilitation" into "internal push", finally i think i got the better expression for my submission just now!!

**Wang Hongwei:** i quote Hoang Hann as saying

**Wang Ping:** Dear all, time flies. We're coming to the end of our discussion for today. Thank you all for your warm participation. We are looking forward to seeing you again next year on Jan 11th to talk about teachers doing action research as part of our teachers professional development series! Thank you!

**Wendy Ashby:** Thanks everybody - it was an interesting discussion!

**Kiki:** Xuemei, I suggest to try one or two simple approaches with your pees at the very beginning, such as 2+2 Observation Protocol, let them see the changes:-)

**Phanisara:** Really enjoy seeing you all. Thank you!!

**Wang Hongwei:** self-reflction is also advocated by the greatest educator 2000 year ago, Confusius!!it still serves well!!

**Amanda 2:** Thank YOU all.

**sonthida:** Thank you very much.

**Kiki:** It's an amazing afternoon! It was nice meeting your guys here! Hope c u soon! bye!

**Wang Shujuan:** Looking forward to talking to you next time.See you.



**Wang Hongwei:** thank you so much for the talk!!

**Xuemei Peng:** Thanks ,Kiki and all of you

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** This web chat is very useful. The roundtable today seems to be too small for all the 'knights' to share. Let me give you my response to the question "How have you changed as a teacher?" There are three things: first, I work harder and more carefully. Then I have positive viewpoint towards peer reflection and student feed back, and last, I learn not just self-reflection but to give others reflection and help in our professional field. Thanks.

**Wang Ping:** Professor Ubon, you have set a brilliant example for teachers who always improve themselves professionally. Thank you so much!

**ubon sanpatchayapong 2:** Thank you so much, too Wang Ping : )

**Wang Ping:** Hope in future we will have more opportunities to hear your insights on teaching and teacher training!